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Let Your Congressman Know

Mineral King Development – Yes Or No?

Should Mineral King Valley be developed or should it be left as it is now?

That's the question the Times-Delta is putting before its readers in a unique, first-time straw ballot on such an issue. The voting offers readers a chance to voice their views on a matter of Tulare County interest.

The balloting will allow the so-called "silent majority' of residents in the county to express their opinion on the Mineral King question and will give the usually more vocal opponents of the development a chance to register their feelings.

The final tally will be published in the Times-Delta, plus, the results will be sent to Rep. John Krebs, D-Fresno.

The events of the last few days indiciate the interest and division of opinions among county residents continues at a high level.

The renewed interest began on Feb. 26, when the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the long-delayed project was issued.

That statement by the U.S. Forest Service called for reduced peak capacity and less expensive access to the proposed Mineral King development.

The debate on the project has been waxing and waning since 1965, when the forest service first solicited bids for developing the valley.

Walt Disney Productions was awarded the permit to begin development of a $60 million resort, but suits by the Sierra Club delayed the project as the matter went into the courts.

On Monday, Rep. Krebs, who had side-stepped the issue since his election to Congress, announced his opposition to the development of Mineral King Valley.

He said the development plans would not be in the best interest of the residents of the district, and those in Tulare County and Three Rivers in particular.

Krebs cited four key considerations in his decision: "Irreversible disfigurement" of the valley and "severe physical impact" which would be inflicted on the approaches to Mineral King because of "inevitable commercialization": the negative impact on the San Joaquin Valley's air quality because of the increase in the number of automobiles of visitors to the development; the cost of improving the access road recommended in the EIS and the question over who would build it; and the fact that the price structure which would be needed to cover the proposed development would effectively prevent many persons from enjoying the area.

The Tulare County Board of Supervisors has long been in favor of the development of Mineral King and Tuesday chastised Krebs for his stand.

Supervisors instructed Calvin Baldwin, county counsel, to draft a letter to Krebs outlining the points on which they feel he has erroneously staked his opposition to the development.

They also will request a public meeting in Visalia with Krebs to discuss the issue before he submits legislation which would incorporate Mineral King into Sequoia National Park. Krebs had stated he intends to introduce such a bill within 30 days.

The supervisors are particularly critical of Krebs' failure to consult with local officials over a project which is seen as creating as many as 2,500 jobs countywide.

With new battle lines on Mineral King now being drawn, Tulare County residents can make public their feelings on the issue by participating in the Times-Delta's straw ballot.

If you would like to make your voice heard, clip out the ballot, mark the box you prefer and mail it promptly to: Mineral King, care of Visalia Times-Delta, P.O. Box 31, Visalia, Calif. 93277. Ballots must be postmarked by midnight, March 24, to be included in our final tally.

Readers may feel free to enclose any comments they may have on Mineral King on another sheet of paper with their ballot.

Results will be forwarded to Krebs promptly after tabulation.